

The Christmas Girlfriend by Browneyesparker

Category: Stranger Things (TV 2016)

Genre: Best Friends, Christmas, Christmas Fluff, F/M, Fake Dating, Fake/Pretend Relationship, Fluff, Friends to Lovers, Mike x Eleven - Freeform, Mileven, No Sex, college students, oh my god they were roommates, stranger things

Language: English

Characters: Dustin Henderson, Eleven | Jane Hopper, Holly Wheeler, Jonathan Byers, Karen Wheeler, Lucas Sinclair, Maxine "Max" Mayfield, Mike Wheeler, Nancy Wheeler, Steve Harrington, Ted Wheeler, Will Byers

Relationships: Eleven | Jane Hopper/Mike Wheeler

Status: In-Progress

Published: 2018-12-03

Updated: 2018-12-03

Packaged: 2022-04-23 03:07:26

Rating: Teen And Up Audiences

Warnings: Creator Chose Not To Use Archive Warnings, No Archive Warnings Apply

Chapters: 1

Words: 1,638

Publisher: archiveofourown.org

Summary:

Sick of being asked if he's dating anyone, Mike takes his best friend El up on her offer to be his fake girlfriend for Christmas break. But when pretending turns into something more, Mike and El realize that maybe they've been in love all along.

The Christmas Girlfriend

Chapter 1

I wish my mom would stop asking me if I was bringing anyone home for Christmas,” Mike said when he and El had taken a study break. “It’s like now that I’m a senior, she expects me to have a girlfriend or something.”

El opened a box of Cheez-Its. “I guess she doesn’t understand your love affair with *Medicine*,” she teased.

“Every time I even try and mention that to her, she says ‘Michael, that’s all well and good but a stethoscope doesn’t keep you warm at night’.”

El giggled and got two Cokes from her fridge and handed one to Mike. “She’s right, you know.”

“Look who’s talking. I don’t ever see *you* going out on dates.”

“That’s because me and Dr. Carter are very happy together, thank you very much.”

“The last time I checked, Dr. Carter was *fictional*!”

“So what?” El retorted. “My father and mother aren’t expecting *me* to bring home a boyfriend this Christmas. Actually, they’re not expecting me home at all this Christmas because they’re finally going on their honeymoon.”

“I thought you were okay with that. You said that this was the only time they could go.”

“I was fine with it. I’m still fine with it, I just don’t want to stay on campus all by myself.”

“I thought you were going home with Max.”

“That changed when Lucas asked her to go home with him and meet his parents. The next big, important step in the relationship, it means things are getting serious. I want her to go and meet them.”

“You don’t want to go visit Jonathan in California with Will?”

“And feel like a third wheel in their sibling dynamic for a whole month? Not interested!” El answered as her *Mazzy Star* tape ended, she leaned across the table and put on a *Bing Crosby* cassette. *White Christmas* filled the little apartment. “I know they don’t do it on purpose but I feel like I don’t quite fit in with them.”

“Second marriages can be hard especially if there are kids involved and all of them are older. Maybe the 3 of you need to find something you can do together,” Mike informed her. “It’s textbook.”

“Look at you. One semester of psych and you think you’re a shrink!” El teased. “My dynamic with Will is fine. He’s one of my best friends, I love that he’s my brother now. It’s just. . . *The Clash* and the obvious disdain for *Madonna*.”

“You know, you could just come home with me for the holidays. Holly loves you and my parents won’t talk about my impending spinsterhood in front of one of my friends.”

“I think spinsterhood only counts if you’re a girl and you’re over a certain age.”

“Whatever. It beats staying here all by yourself or going to California and listening to Jon’s manifestos about why Madonna and Whitney Houston need to be stopped in the music industry.”

Eleven paused thoughtfully and then jumped up, grabbing takeout menus from the fridge. “I’m ordering pizza. Are you hungry?”

Mike’s stomach grumbled and he remembered he hadn’t eaten since grabbing some celery and peanut butter before he had gone to his biology lab. “Do you think we could order pizza?” he requested.

“Sure. Pineapple?”

Mike made a face and shook his head. “You can get your half

pineapple. Just make sure it doesn't touch any of *my* slices."

El placed their order and then looked at Mike. "I'll come home with you for Christmas," she told him. "Just let me pretend to be your girlfriend."

Mike choked on his Coke. "*What!?*"

"Let me pretend to be your girlfriend!" El repeated. "Come on, Mike! I don't think it would be that unbelievable. We've been friends long enough that things could have progressed naturally to something more."

Mike shook his head. "You've watched one too many romantic comedies, Jane. Do you really think anybody would fall for that? *Really?*"

"Don't call me Jane!" El ordered him sternly before shrugging. "And I don't know I've never pretended to be anybody's girlfriend before."

"My mom is the Harlequin Queen, I'm sure she's read a few books where two characters pretended to be boyfriend and girlfriend."

El rolled her eyes. "Mike, you're not going to tell her that we're pretending to be boyfriend and girlfriend. Why are you making things so complicated?" she sighed and punched in the pizza parlor number. "Hi, I'd like a large pizza. One half pineapple and the other half veggie lovers. Make sure that the pineapple doesn't touch the other half. Okay, thank you."

She hung up and looked at Mike.

"What?" Mike asked.

"Dinner will be ready in 20 minutes and since I promised my sheriff father not to give my address out, you have to go and pick up the pizza."

"I'm studying El," Mike reminded her. "Why can't you go and get it yourself?"

"Since you insisted, I'll go with you!" El answered as she sat down

and opened up one of her textbooks to pass time while they waited.

“If we’re both going to go, why didn’t we just go out to eat?”

“We still have a lot of studying to do before our finals,” El hummed without looking up from her reading.

“Right,” Mike said, glancing at the clock. “Isn’t ER on in two hours? You know you’re going to put that on as soon as it comes on. You never miss an episode.”

“Yet, I am not failing any of my classes.” El pulled on her coat and a pair of gloves, she pushed her glasses up further on the bridge of her nose. She stopped her cassette player. “Come on, you’ve been studying for hours without taking a break. Clearing your head will be good for you.”

Mike looked like he was going to protest for a minute and then sighed before removing his own glasses and marking his place in his textbook. “Alright but only because I know you won’t leave me alone until I do come with you. I am saving us both time here.”

“Does this mean I can convince you to watch ER with me tonight?”

Mike shook his head and got his coat. “There is no way.”

“I know you secretly enjoy it.”

Mike searched for his keys for a second before locating them underneath an empty bag of barbecue potato chips. “That wouldn’t hold up in a court of law. You know I secretly enjoy it. What evidence do you have?”

El laughed and locked the apartment door behind them.

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“If we did pretend to be boyfriend and girlfriend, how would we tell my family we got together?” Mike asked when they were in his car. “Would we tell Lucas and Max that we were pretending? You know Lucas lives in the same state as me. They just saw us today, they would know something was up.”

El shrugged. "We can tell your friends and family in Indiana that things just progressed naturally between us. We'll tell Lucas and Max that we've been keeping it a secret from them or that they've been so obsessed with each other, they didn't notice we were together."

"Do you think they'd believe us?"

El smiled. "Who? Lucas and Max?" she shrugged. "Who cares if they don't believe us? It doesn't matter, all we have to do is make your parents believe we're dating."

"What are we going to tell them *after* Christmas is over?"

"We broke up because you cared too much about your studied and not about spending time with me," El replied.

"*That's* unbelievable though. Everyone in my family knows how much I like spending time with you. Steve has even asked me why I don't just date you already."

"Well, I guess we'll cross that bridge when we come to it then." El unbuckled and grabbed her purse. "I'll be right back!"

She dashed into the pizza parlor and quickly paid for their food and made an impulse purchase of a liter bottle of Coke because he refused to drink coffee and pizza together. But he needed the caffeine to study all night.

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When ER started at 10pm, El settled in front of the TV. Mike migrated to the couch with one of his textbooks and sat down next to her.

El suppressed a smile.

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"I just got off the phone with my mom," Mike said the next day when El got back from her poli sci class.

"Oh?" El asked, washing her hands before grabbing a box of Lucky

Charms and opening them. “What did you guys talk about?”

“I told her that you were my girlfriend and that I was bringing you home for Christmas vacation.”

“How’d that go?” El asked as she grabbed a handful of cereal and poured it into her mouth.

“Believe it or not, she actually bought that we’re dating. She’s *thrilled* and she’ll be more than happy for you to come home with me too,” Mike replied. “So, now that we’ve gotten that taken care of, we need to come up with a convincing story about how we got together. She didn’t ask but I’m sure she’s going to eventually.”

El chewed thoughtfully. “I still think we could tell her that our friendship just progressed into something more naturally. It’s not like it would be unbelievable, we’ve been friends since we were *freshman* in college,” she reminded him. “I might like romance in my TV shows but it’s not that practical in real life. I like the familiarity of two friends realizing there might be something more between them and seeing where it could lead.”

Mike sighed. “I guess we’ll just have to go with your thing, since you put it so well.”

“You can save the big romantic gesture for your *real* girlfriend,” she told him.

TBC. . .

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Author's Note:

This story wandered into my brain in the middle of November and demanded to be written. I’ve neglected Mike and Eleven for too long as well, and they really wanted me to talk to them again. So, what better time to do that than at Christmas. I hope you enjoy this and will tell me what you think, even if this chapter was all over the place.

Until Next Time!